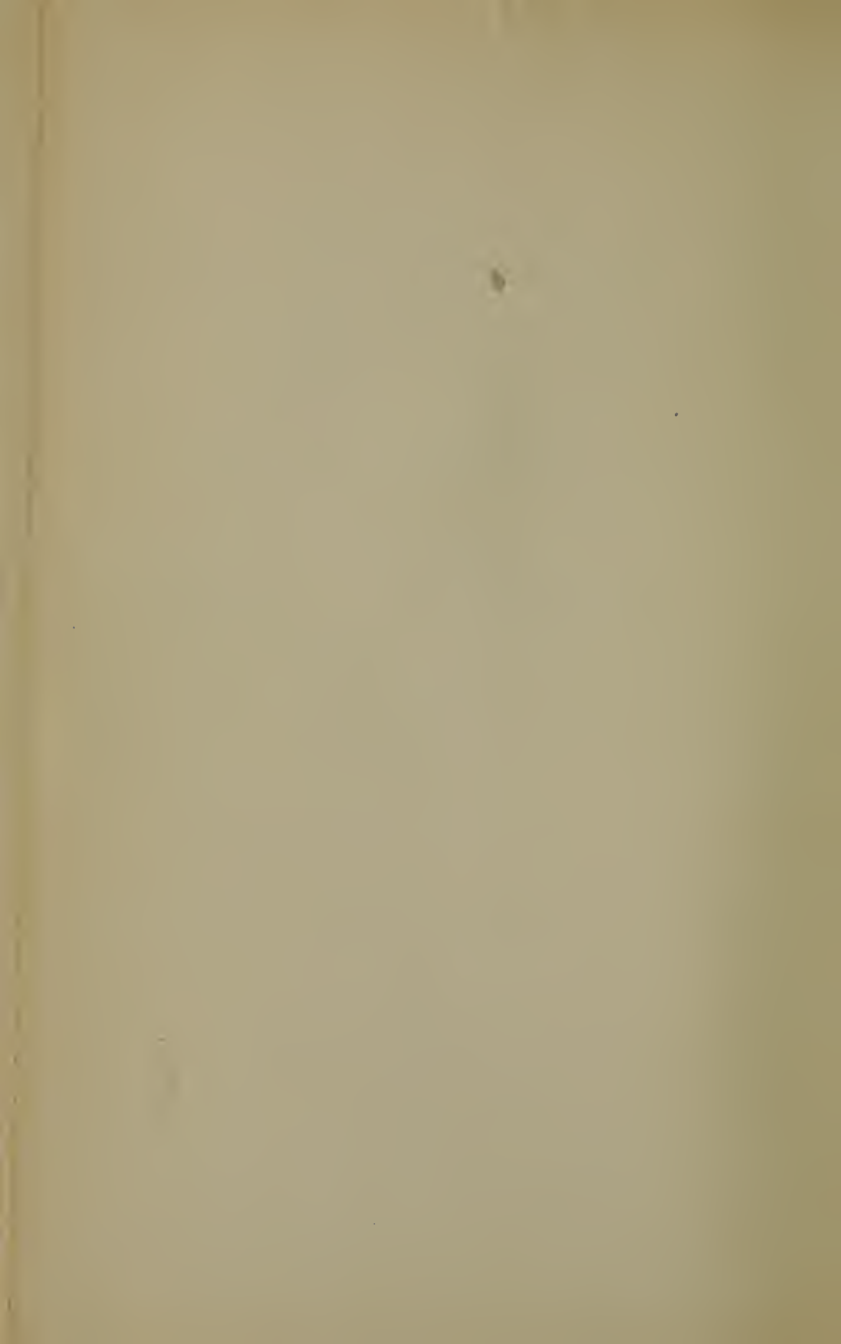




STRICKLAND
GILLILAN

#46

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Oakland, Calif.



LAUGH IT OFF

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

INCLUDING FINNIGIN
INCLUDING YOU AND ME
A SAMPLE CASE OF HUMOR
SUNSHINE AND AWKWARDNESS

EACH \$1.25

LAUGH IT OFF

INCLUDING
SONGS OF SANITY

BY
STRICKLAND GILLILAN
Author of "Including Finnigin," etc.



CHICAGO
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1924

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DEDICATION

This book is worshipingly dedicated to the whole army—past, present and future—of those who have, through humor and its attendant soul-health, taught the world to face and fight its troubles; not surrender. Chief of those of the near-past (but always present in the hearts of those that knew him personally) I name Robert Jones Burdette, who said, one time: “I am sixty-five years old, son, and nearly every calamity I have ever known, failed to happen.”

—STRICKLAND GILLILAN

THE BALLYHOO

I wanted to call this book "To Hell With Gloom," but my publisher and my other friend wouldn't let me.

No wonder I hate Fear and Gloom; or that Fear and Gloom are the only things I am afraid of. I was brought up scared to death. Apprehension was my steady diet. I was told that dogs would bite me; that lightning would strike me; that horses would kick me; that the locust-trees in the yard were almost sure to be targets for storm bolts; that the world might come to an end any old time; that hell was a place of fire and brimstone, literally, and that unless I did a lot of things I didn't seem able to do or find anybody else doing, or that if I did certain things everybody else seemed to be doing, I should be plunged into that seeth-

THE BALLYHOO

ing, sulphurous cauldron and boiled, and fricasseed and barbecued forever and ever amen.

I was taught chiefly that God was a god of wrath; and that vengeance was His. I was taught to be deadly afraid of snakes and of almost everything else in the universe. Consequently I spent the first fifteen years or so of my life in a tremor of fear or in sullenly thinking "What's the use? If this dreadful thing doesn't get me some dreadful thing else will." I was hardly ever free from goose-flesh. I was told I was a dying sinner unless I repented and felt the saving grace. I tried to scare up a lot of things to repent of, tried to repent of them and tried to make myself believe I felt the saving grace. I was afraid I might die without feeling I was saved. I was taught selfishly to be anxious lest my own puny soul be lost.

I found out afterward that although there was a deep and devout meaning back of and beneath all this talk; and though the intentions

THE BALLYHOO

of those indulging in this scary chatter were of the finest gold, they either did not know what they were talking about or else didn't get their idea across. All they did to me was to scare me half to death and lower my already too-low efficiency. I literally believe that if I had been given a peaceful, happy, courageous childhood; had been told that nothing would hurt me instead of that everything would, I should have been further along, by a hundred per cent on the highroad to so-called success, than I have managed to go. If I had had emphasized to me by preachers (as it was by parents) the loving quality of God instead of the vengeful side of Him, when I didn't know a solitary thing I had ever done to offend Him, I should have years and years of genuine happiness instead of what seems like centuries of anxiety, to look back at now. Hence, from this time on I shall wear the war-bonnet and fighting paint and carry a sharp tomahawk and a poisoned spear

THE BALLYHOO

to fight Gloom and Fear and Scare and all other embodiments of the boo-stuff. I shall try to comfort every scared person I find and if possible kill the scarer or laugh him off the map.

I literally meant the intended title of this book, "To Hell With Gloom." If there be any sulphuric lagoon with strangely fumes rising from it and blue blazes flickering above its surface, the proper inhabitant of that puddle is old man Gloom and his cross-eyed, hare-lipped, pigeon-breasted, wretched sister Fear. And when they head for that unhappy region I want them to go rapidly, hand in hand, and share the same hot fate.

In their stead I want to set up Intelligence, Courage, Faith—three Godlike, manly, brave things to dispossess these unclean, craven cowards who have done so much and such great injury to others and to me.

Yours very much in earnest,
STRICKLAND GILLILAN.

LAUGH IT OFF

LET'S GO

I WRITE not to bring you gloom.
You don't want me to. Nobody wants gloom at all—that is, no sane person.

Especially does no person in his right mind want gloom badly enough to send for it or ask some one to put it into a book.

Beside that, hardly anybody anywhere needs to step outside real life or to open a book, to get plenty of gloom. Home talent can always supply the demand.

And there is no community, no matter how blest with cheerfulness it may seem to the casual observer, but has its own particular human gloom spigot. All that is necessary, should gloom be desired, is to go and turn

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him on and let him squirt. The only difficulty is in shutting him off when you have all of his product you can endure.

But even if you had wanted me to write gloomy stuff, I should have balked on you. I hate the stuff so; I wouldn't be caught dead in a ditch with it.

If it did anybody any good, I should act differently about it. Much as I hate it, I should unselfishly lay aside my own personal prejudice and go handing it out with one hand while I held my nose with the other.

But it does no good.

It only does harm.

So we will.

FACE THE SUNSHINE

Face the sunshine—let the shadows lie behind you;
Face the sunshine from life's dawning to its night;
Face the sunshine, though at first its brightness
blind you—

Face the sunshine! Keep the shadows out of sight.

GLOOM'S DEFINITION

Face the sunshine—let its beams your smiling
brighten;

Face the sunshine—let its rays suffuse your soul;

Face the sunshine—let its warmth your pleasure
heighten;

Face the sunshine and be quit of grief and dole.

Face the sunshine—let its sweet caress remind you
Of the brightness we should scatter through the
years;

Face the sunshine—let the shadows fall behind you,
And the sunshine will put rainbows in your tears!

GLOOM'S DEFINITION

There is a traditional place full of bubbling
brimstone and other uncomfortable conditions,
to which all people and things that are bad are
supposed to be consigned “eventually”; and
in the case of Gloom I add the rest of the
flour slogan, “Why not now?”

By Gloom I do not mean sanely serious
thought, even the most intensely serious.

LAUGH IT OFF

Too great respect cannot be paid to the thinking habit. It is far too rare.

But there is nothing necessarily synonymous or even genuinely harmonious between Gloom and seriousness.

That sweet earnestness that looks out on the world with a smile of courage and hope and faith—that is genuine seriousness.

Against the habit of not thinking between meals, one cannot say too strong or too condemnatory things.

Gloom is panic; it is the result of throwing the mental faculties into neutral, shutting the eyes, heading down hill, and taking your hands off the steering wheel, saying, "Here goes nothin'."

Gloom is abject, supine surrender.

The pessimist is faithfully defined as "a blind man looking, in the dark with the help of an unlighted lantern, for something that isn't there."

One may exhaust his vials of abuse, his

GLOOM'S DEFINITION

traducing, objugatory vocabulary, his spleen, his everything that is uncomplimentary, and then finish by saying: "And when I've called you all these things, Gloom, I've promoted you!"

Gloom is the doctrine and philosophy of malignant fools. There is no bad condition that is remedied by its exercise and indulgence; and everything good is retarded by it.

The time when it is used is always when it is a hindrance and a brake on the wheels of progress and improvement.

Gloom goes and sits and sulks on the bank at freshet time and watches things drown, deploring the fact that they have to drown, and predicting the conditions of sorrow and bereavement after the drowning shall have taken place.

If half the energy were exerted rowing a skiff or throwing out a rope to the sinking victims, they might be saved.

LAUGH IT OFF

Gloom is excess baggage.

The only time one could really afford to be gloomy or downcast would be when there was nothing for Intelligence to do, nobody that Courage might assist, and no cause that Faith might sustain and advance.

And such a time will never come.

FEAR, THE KILLER

There's a fact that you have noted, if with reason
you're imbued:

That most horrors reach their climax in "the panic
that ensued."

Not the fire that trailed the train wreck—this the
victims might elude,

But "The Reaper" gleaned his harvest in "the panic
that ensued."

Floods arose and swept the valley; into homes it
dared intrude.

Ten were drowned—a hundred perished in the
"panic that ensued."

FEAR, THE KILLER

When compared with Fear, the lethal, other foes are
weak and crude—

Half earth's tragedies have happened in "the panic
that ensued."

Gloom is not only surrender—it is that most
craven of cowardly things—surrender without
a fight—surrender in advance of the actual
peril.

It is the shameful, poltroon thing that sees
danger coming and makes its victims lie down
in wretched despair to be trampled on and run
over.

Its doctrine is the quintessence of that
enervating courage killer, "what's-the-use."

It is faithless fatalism.

There is a kind of fatalism that has none
of Gloom.

It is a belief that destiny holds only good
for us.

And he who holds that sort of fatalism
usually works so confidently along the lines

LAUGH IT OFF

of what he anticipates as inevitable, that good, otherwise impossible, often does actually result from it.

But Gloom is the opposite variety.

It has for its motto "Can't"—the gospel of the white-livered coward.

There are a lot of old yard-long-faced joy-killers in the world who go about asking:

"What is the world coming to, anyway?"

"Why, you poor old hobnailed-livered spoilsport, you, the world is coming to whatever it was coming to when you were young.

If it is anything bad, your birth helped it along considerably.

If it is anything good, it is getting there in spite of your efforts to clog its wheels.

The world isn't "coming to" any destination that is not a part of the ages-old, eternity-long plan of a wise and omnipotent Being, and that plan would not be a bad one—would it?

The fact that He is all kind is attested by

GLOOM-FOUNDERED

the fact that He hasn't killed you off; and the fact that He is all wise is attested by the fact that you are a laughing stock among all intelligent and normal humans.

GLOOM-FOUNDERED

Pharmacist, build me a cocktail carbolic.

I've had a call from my pessimist friend.

He, with a countenance grim, diabolic,

Tells me the world will soon come to an end.

Told me? Nay, proved it, by portent and token;

Made it so plain that a child mightn't err.

Since he has left me my spirit is broken—

No more with him shall a session occur!

Build, 'pothecary, a drink that is deadly—

Blithely I'll scribble my name in your book.

Objects in front of my optics glow redly,

Whate'er direction I happen to look.

"Merc."—labeled "bich." or the potent carbolic—

Matters not which, so it's lethal enough.

I with that rotter have had my last frolic;

I am fed up on his mirth-murder stuff.

LAUGH IT OFF

Quick, kindly druggist, prepare me the knockout;

Make it a sure one—we can't have it fail.

Prophets of evil, I've ordered a lockout—

Never again shall you camp on my trail.

Slip me the hemlock—hold steady; don't waste it.

I shall be rid of this joy-killing Jim.

Suicide? Horrors! You don't think *I'd* taste it!

Not for a million—I've bought it for HIM!

FALSE PROPHECIES

There has never been, in all the world's history, a time when prophets of evil were not predicting the ultimate end of all things.

The bellyachers and the amateur Jeremiahs have been holding the advance funeral ceremonies over the world's impending death right along.

If everything possible that was bad had actually already occurred, there would have been no more tears shed; no more wails wailed; no more lamentations lamentated than there have been while a patient people passed along

FALSE PROPHECIES

generation by generation, most of them doing the best they could according to their varying lights, all of them applauding virtue and hissing evil, some of them laughing a good deal, more of them smiling bravely, many of them with eyes uplifted to a Higher Source of power and authority and saying, "Thy will, not ours! Show us the way! And we know 'that somehow good will be the final goal of ill' and of other hateful things."

These souls full of faith in the darkness and courage in the light have done more to make the world a livable place than have all the old crepe-hangers who sat in sackcloth and ashes and howled "Woe is me!"

Had there been more of cheerfulness, more of a sense of humor and proportion among the old soothsayers, the world would be vastly further on its millenniumward path than it is today.

The people who have hung wreaths of immortelles all over their religion have driven

LAUGH IT OFF

vastly more people away from the gospel of sweetness and light and kindness and happiness than they have ever scared away from the paths of sin.

People in this world are toled much easier than they are driven.

An old, whiskered, prickly-shirted weeper sitting in an ashpile pouring good lye ashes on his silly old head and howling "Flee from the wrath to come" got a good laugh in his day and deserved it.

If he had dressed himself up in a red robe, twined hollyhocks in his galways and bought him a mouth organ and said "Come on, fellers, this is the best way, let's go," he'd have had the crowd, would have been much happier, consumed less of Perry Davis painkiller and lived longer than he did by the means he chose.

Religion is not a sad thing.

It is a thing of joy.

When a man or a woman hangs crepe on

FALSE PROPHECIES

his religion, it is because there is something dead inside it.

The Bible is brim full of texts, from cover to cover, whose purport and meaning are "Go to it, old man! If you do the very best you can and the most you can all the time, with all the help and guidance you can get from around you and above, things will break right for you till the last; and there won't be any last at that."

This is the spirit and teaching of religion.

But these people who consider seriousness and mournfulness the same thing will never find any of that in the Bible.

Their blind spot covers every solitary cheerful thing in the whole spiritual landscape. And they flap past all the joyful and assuring scripture till they get to Revelation, the most beautiful collection of poem and allegory ever produced by human or divine pen, and read you in an awful tone, a chapter

LAUGH IT OFF

to prove that everything is going blooey and repeat, tomorrow sometime.

End of the world! End of the world!
That makes me see red.

Some old idiot is always telling us the end of the world is coming. You and I were literally raised on ends of the world. These old crones who are looking eagerly for unhappiness for themselves and others are always reading and ignorantly distorting some scripture to prove to us that some certain time next year or earlier the whole job is going to pot in a particularly uncomfortable, crude, brutal and ruthless way.

Those old howlers and "viewers with alarm" were literally "excess prophets."

THE RESURRECTION VS. CALVARY

Some people have religion of the kind that doesn't
go

As far as was intended—it is subject to correction.

FALSE PROPHECIES

It seems they've read their Bibles far as Calv'ry
with its woe,

But didn't read on further till they reached the
resurrection.

They're gluttons for the sobs of life but shudder
at its joy;

Gormands for grief, whose tears must flow in every
known direction.

They throw away the gold of life but treasure life's
alloy—

They stayed to weep at Calvary and missed the
resurrection.

Golgotha's hill was not the bourne our Lord and
Master sought;

The agony from thorn and nail did not complete His
mission;

With gentler far intentions were His mind and spirit
fraught—

He came to cheer His fellowmen and sweeten their
condition.

The cross-crowned crest no climax was to His brief
earthly span;

LAUGH IT OFF

He did not mean to steep our souls in permanent dejection.

His grief but marked that darkest hour before our day began—

Who stay to weep at Calvary may miss the resurrection!

GLOOM *vs.* INTELLIGENCE

Fear and Gloom and Intelligence never work together as teammates.

When Fear or Gloom enters in at the door, Intelligence and Faith and Courage fly out the window.

When crises are on, you need to use one hundred per cent of your intelligence.

There is always a crisis.

Life is an endless parade of crises.

When you are gloomy you have less intelligence than you have at other times, and that is less than anybody can get along with.

There is nobody anywhere who has any

GLOOM VS. INTELLIGENCE

more sense than he needs even when it is all working.

Nature has so arranged things that the more we know the more is required of us.

The only person free from responsibility is the fool, and being a fool is a high price to pay for exemption from responsibility.

Our responsibility is in direct ratio to our intelligence.

We are held responsible not only for what we know but also for what we had a chance to know and don't know.

The great mistake a great many people make is in believing sepulchral solemnity is the only trustworthy symptom of seriousness.

They have not realized that the only worthwhile optimism is that which can discover, recognize, and deplore, (and take steps to remove) abuses and wrongs, without crying about it.

They do not know that "ha ha" is as appro-

LAUGH IT OFF

priate and dismaying a prelude to a swift kick in the seat of intrenched wrong's trousers, as is "boo hoo."

You can have pride in your community and keep it wholesome, only by staying cheerful.

"I LIVE HERE"

A garden, a perfect mosaic, deep green 'gainst the blackest of loam,

Spread out near a little log cabin—obscure but immaculate home!

I paused to admire—who could help it?—the weedless expanse near the door,

Where, pleased with my pleased inspection, stood a "mammy" of years that are yore.

"A beautiful garden," I ventured. She cupped a brown hand to her ear.

"Fine garden!" I shouted. "Oh, sholy! It ought to be fine—I live here!"

I went on my way with a sermon as great as I ever had heard.

“I LIVE HERE”

The highest paid preacher existent could never have added a word.

Were every human who cumpers the tiniest spot of the earth

To see that the place he inhabits—the work brain or fingers gave birth——

Stood perfect as e’er he could make it—dear God, what a different sphere!

Let’s borrow our motto from “mammy”: “It ought to be fine—I live here!”

Some people believe faith and intelligence are incompatible.

They think as a little boy thought “Faith is believing something you know can’t be true.”

Faith is not blind, ignorant credulity.

No, Faith is not that, by any means.

Those who have seen the past with the clearest and broadest vision are those whose faith in the future is the greatest.

Some people consider ignorance necessary

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to the possession and retention of faith.

They do not regard intelligence as a requisite for right or Christian character, but it is.

It is as much an attribute of righteousness or genuine Christianity or other religion as is faith.

And he who misses any opportunity for gaining other truths has committed as much of a sin as if he had denied the faith.

Christ set us as clear an example in intelligence as he did in belief.

He thought, and studied how best to put the truth to others.

He speaks as a marvelous philosopher.

To follow Him we must be as intelligent as we possibly can be.

Nobody ever asked Him a question without getting a prompt, deeply-thought-out—nay even a witty—answer.

He was mentally alert, never caught napping by the controversialists.

NO PLACE FOR FEAR

He was no boob and no example for those
who believe faith and intelligence are inimical
one to another. On the contrary.

NO PLACE FOR FEAR

Most every day brings some grave situation,

Not to be feared, but faced.

Alternatives offer, in state and in nation,

Not to be feared, but faced.

Dilemmas confront us each hour of the day,

Presenting both right and erroneous way.

These quandaries shouldn't depress us; for they

Aren't to be feared, but faced.

Each day of our life brings a problem or two,

Not to be feared, but solved.

We've off with the old one, let's on with the new—

Not to be feared, but solved.

The puzzle involving the right and the wrong;

The question how not to be weak, but be strong;

These "sums" in life's school-day come bobbing
along,

Not to be feared, but solved.

LAUGH IT OFF

Each day in the field there arises a foe,

Not to be feared, but fought.

He's not to be dodged or avoided, you know—

Not to be feared, but fought.

There's nothing on earth unmistakably right

That we may maintain without strenuous fight.

Intrenched we find always iniquitous might—

Not to be feared, but fought.

THE CREPE-HANGERS

The reluctance with which some people permit others to be cheerful is appalling.

These might be called "scatterers" of sunshine—they can't bear to see any accumulation of sunshine without scattering it out so thinly that it is ineffective.

They can hardly tolerate the sight of human lightheartedness.

It sickens them to hear care-free laughter.

A fine instance of this disposition is the old crone of either sex who goes to the young

THE CREPE-HANGERS

couple, in transports of delight over their first-born, and says: "Ah, don't love it too much! You might lose it!"

Love a baby too much!

Oh, how could that be done?

Every baby born into this world has a perfect right to be a love-billionaire.

All the love in the universe; the total love of this earth, of the planets, of all the stars in the milky way, is insufficient to give a baby what it deserves and will need in the love line before it gets through with the mundane journey.

Love a baby too much!

Even God, to whom "all things are possible," cannot and could not love a baby too much.

He "so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son" for its redemption—remember it was a world full of babies of all ages that He loved every one thus.

LAUGH IT OFF

And yet these old killjoys and crepe-hangers seem to think it possible for a mere human to love a baby too much.

“You might lose it,” eh?

As if that possibility should subtract from our love and the demonstration of it.

Why, that ought merely to make us love it more, if possible. If the child be lent to us but for a few days or weeks the love of a whole lifetime must be crowded into those few days or weeks; therefore we ought to work overtime.

And the object of our human love should know it through his every conscious moment. For my own part, having had a father of the old school, to whom a display of sentiment on his part seemed a sign of weakness, I always felt the need of letting those I loved know about it.

With this thought in mind I one day set down in my note book this expression of my attitude toward my own and only son:

THE CREPE-HANGERS

Son, let us love each other so
As on our pilgrimage we go,
That whichsoever one is left,
Of his devoted pal bereft,
To feel the absence and to rue it,
Can say: "I loved him and he knew it."

The old buzzards who go about trying to take the exquisite sweetness from that first ecstatic parent-love ought to be suppressed, gently if possible, violently if necessary. Love of babies should be kept alive, even if a pulmotor has to be sent for.

And to show you how fear and intelligence cannot live in the same mind at the same time:

One time there was a long-haired highbrow making a speech to a cluster of his own sort of critters.

He was giving them statistics, and you know what a treat statistics are to an audience! They just eat 'em. They will listen eagerly, sitting on the extreme front edges of their

LAUGH IT OFF

chairs, eyes and mouths agape, till the last figure has been oozed, then say pleadingly: "Oh, just one more little statistic, please!" And the nicest thing about statistics, from the standpoint of the economy of gray matter, is that you don't have to know anything or even be able to think, in order to give statistics till the cows come home.

All you need is a flippant—almost impudent—knowledge of the ten figures, and the ability to arrange them rapidly and extemporaneously into clumps of from nine to twenty-seven figures each, and shoot them out, glibly and solemnly, to people who have no gas masks.

By the time you've shot the second or third clump, nobody present will know any more as to what you are talking about than you knew when you started.

And if you see some lynx-eyed person in the audience who perhaps is a lightning calculator or some such freak and seems to be

THE CREPE-HANGERS

keeping tabs on you, throw in a fraction and you'll have him gasping and bewildered for a week.

Well this fellow was slopping statistics all over the place; exuding figures from every pore; and among other things he said:

"In two hundred fifty thousand years from now this world will be no more."

Like that. He "made it snappy."

One fellow in the crowd jumped up with his eyes sticking out so you could have sat on one and sawed the other off:

"What was that?"

"I say that in two hundred fifty thousand years more this world will be gone."

"Oh," sighed the chap with a look of relief on his face. "I thought you said *one* hundred fifty thousand!"

And yet again to show you how apprehension and intelligence are never yoke-fellows in any brain:

Once not so very long ago one of these

LAUGH IT OFF

fellows with the foot-and-mouth disease—running around and talking all the time—was making a speech to a poor little clot of school-children in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Among other things this visitor told the defenseless children was that the cliff over which the water pours to make Niagara Falls, was wearing away! At the rate of about one inch every ten years!

Now just think of that, would you! Think of this appalling threat! Think of that insidious peril sneaking up on us in the night! Wouldn't that take your appetite for breakfast?

One little boy commenced to bawl like a freshly-weaned calf. Everything else stopped and teacher went back to investigate.

"What's the matter, Bobby?"

"I've g-g-g-got," sobbed the heartbroken lad, "I've g-g-g-got a aunt livin' in Erie!"

Some people have a natural talent, amount-

THE CREPE-HANGERS

ing almost to genius, for finding things to worry about.

They surely must pray fervently when they wake in the morning:

“Give us this day our daily dread”—it isn’t bread they want; they want something substantial to chew on.

They can reach right out into the empty air where you or I could see nothing but golden sunshine and bright blue sky, and grab off a double fistful of dark, gaumy, sticky, gooey gloom, a purplish-black in color.

They’ll divide it with you readily, eagerly.

If you insist they’ll give you all of it—they always know where they can get some more just like it. The supply of imaginary sorrow is unlimited.

If they see a puddle of gloom in the path ahead they don’t tuck their clothes about them and try to tiptoe around it so as not to be smirched by it—no!

They give a glad cry of grief and go and

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throw themselves into the midst of it, lie down, roll over twice, then come out and wipe it off on you or some other cheerful soul who is not only all dressed up, but has some place to go, as well.

And all the time these croakers and joy-murderers are talking about the coming of the end of the world.

WORLD-ENDERS

End of the world! I just must speak of that more fully.

You and I were raised on that sort of scare.

Whenever there is nothing real to arouse somebody's apprehension, they drag in the end of the world.

What do they know about it? Nothing.

You and I have lived through nineteen or twenty perfectly well-authenticated ends of the world, yet still the old thing is hitting on all six, and will be till God gets good and

AFTER SCHOOL

ready for shutting off the power and applying the brakes.

They've proved it always by science and the scriptures, and the fact that the end didn't come at the time they said the scriptures prophesied, proves one thing: The scriptures and science were misinterpreted.

The number of lies that have been proved by somebody's distortion of poorly-understood scriptures can hardly be counted.

And it is always some bad thing they foretell, never anything that is cheerful or inviting.

They make the end of the world an awful thing, when it isn't necessarily so to be.

They hold up the judgment as a terrible ordeal.

Why not substitute this picture?

AFTER SCHOOL

When home from school's long day he drifts
And to my gaze his fresh face lifts.

LAUGH IT OFF

I read the tale of all the joys
And sorrows that are every boy's—
I knew them once. I feel them yet,
Through later living's deeper fret.
But still I hold him close, and say
"Son, tell me all about your day."

He tells me—whimpering o'er each grief,
And laughing next in swift relief:
The big, bad boy who hid his hat;
The girl who slipped from where she sat,
To meet with Teacher's well-earned frown;
And how the littlest boy fell down!
I list—not that I do not know,
But only that I love him so.

When, at life's troublous school day's close,
Each world-worn pupil homeward goes,
Straight to the Father's eyes we'll raise
Our own, prepared for blame or praise.
He'll slip an arm around, and say:
"Child, tell me all about your day."
Not that Our Father does not know,
But only that He loves us so.

AFTER SCHOOL

If the coming of the end of the world means a scare to you, that is no compliment to your living in the past or present.

If you want to be rid of that scare, get decent if you aren't.

You might actually enjoy being decent if you got used to it.

If you are decent, stay that way, and try to raise the grade.

Is there anything fairer than that?

Start in living right now—don't even wait for the end of this chapter—so that if you saw that well-advertised end of the world looming right in your face, and knew it for the real article at last, you wouldn't have to shift gears or grab for the emergency brake.

But I fear some of us, if we did actually see it coming,—well, the carelessness with which we have been living, our habit of ignoring the golden rule, would make us feel like paraphrasing the words of the colored soldier in France, in this exciting little yarn:

LAUGH IT OFF

The soldier had been filled with *vin rouge* or *vin blanc* or other such concoction for three or four days.

When at last he came to himself he found himself in a graveyard, late at night.

An active air raid was just beginning. It was a real, old-he air raid.

He saw things come hurtling out of the black void above, strike the graves about him, scattering the ghastly contents here and there and everywhere.

He was sure that was the end of the world.

It corresponded so perfectly with the mental and emotional picture he had always had of that event. He recognized the symptoms.

So he hastily reached into his pants pocket, drew out a pair of loaded dice, threw them as far as he could throw them, and said:

“Git away ev’dence! Come on Gabr’el!!”

But those people who believe the worst is here already and still worse coming tomorrow, while the day after that is bound to be a per-

AFTER SCHOOL

fect ripper of cataclysmic destruction—a debacle, whatever that is—always make me think of a poor fellow who was sitting one night in a basement drinking place or rathskeller.

He had been treated very well as he thought, and very frequently as anybody could see.

He was sitting on the back of his neck, his feet spread out as far apart as they would go, in the sawdust.

He looked like a capital Y with no M. C. A. or M. H. A. to accompany it. His hat was pulled down over the end of his nose, his underlip sagged like that of an orphaned and disconsolate colt, there was a three-days' growth of whiskers on his face.

He was a mess; a sight.

A chap was standing looking at this exhibit.

As the observer looked, a wicked grin overspread his face.

He went to the free lunch which lay spread out on the old-time bar, selected a small brick

LAUGH IT OFF.

of limburger cheese, scratched the tinfoil from one face of the brick, then tiptoed over and rubbed the soft, fragrant cheese on the stiffest bristles under the nose of the sleeper, close up.

Now those of you who have ever smelled limburger cheese in the full flush of its manhood, and have also smelled attar of roses, never get them confused in your memory.

They are different.

There isn't even a family resemblance between the two unless you are color-blind in the nose.

So a change came over the spirit of the slumberer's wood-alcoholic dream.

He began trying to fight off this aromatic intrusion. It would not be fought off. He got one eye partly open and inquired of the surrounding and desecrated air:

"Ain't this awful?"

And nobody said anything.

This surprised the man.

AFTER SCHOOL

How could anybody ignore a serious situation such as this?

Where was their civic-pride; their community spirit?

So he gave them one more chance.

"Ain't this awful?"

And still nobody answered.

This was too much.

He would not even remain in the presence of people so lost to all consideration for the public weal.

He arose, turned his righteous back on this heedless throng, stood as steadily as possible, looked threateningly at the doorway, giving it to understand he would brook no intrusion on his progress, got it intimidated so it probably would not hit him as he went by, and staggered forth into the pitch-dark night.

He was gone a long while.

Finally he came back, fell over the door step, got up and stood weaving back and forth and weeping.

LAUGH IT OFF

"Ain't this awful?" again he repeated.

"Ain't what awful?" asked somebody.

"Oh dear, oh dear," he sobbed. "The whole world stinks!"

That unbeautiful picture is not a caricature; it isn't a cartoon. It is much more nearly a life-size photograph of a pessimist. He thinks the whole world reeks with rottenness, while if he would simply clean up his own premises and his own moral and mental person, he'd be surprised at the improvement in the community.

The whole program of scare and depression ought to be driven out of our lives.

Nobody can estimate how many poor lives are made poorer and how many really worthwhile lives rendered less effective through the pernicious and excuseless habit of "scaring the daylights" out of people.

SCARING CHILDREN

The average child in America was brought

SCARING CHILDREN

up on a diet of boos—note the careful spelling of that word.

Something was always waiting just around the corner to nab the little fellow and rip him limb from limb.

The majority of the children I have known in my lifetime have been simply filled with such direful warnings as these:

That dog (or horse or snake) will bite you.

The lightning will strike you.

That dog may be mad—keep away from him.

That weed is probably poison.

That horse will kick or strike you.

That bull will gore or trample or toss you.

That mushroom is probably a deadly toadstool.

There's a bogie man in the dark and he'll get you.

The black man will get you and carry you off.

The bad man will get you.

LAUGH IT OFF

The conductor (or brakeman or policeman)
will cut your ears off.

The conductor will throw you off the train.

"Come on, conductor, and get this bad little
boy, and throw him off the train—see there,
he's coming!"

You'll get lost.

You'll get sick.

You'll catch cold.

You'll get wet.

A tree might fall on you.

A cat will scratch you.

You might fall into the water and drown.

The world is said to be about to come to an
end.

And once people told their children toma-
toes would give them cancer.

Some persons fired with religious zeal have
the ignorant cruelty in their hearts to pick up
little, innocent children and ask them if they
don't want to repent and confess their sins and
be forgiven, to keep from going to hell where

SCARING CHILDREN

fires burn continually and souls live and writhe forever in the throes of horrible torment.

In my tolerably humble opinion anybody who does this or who injects any of the other fears represented in the above very meager and incomplete list; who deliberately jerks the joy out of a child's life, ought to be shot at sunrise—on the twenty-first of June. The sun rises earlier that day and you could shoot them sooner.

Misery, Woe—Gloom. Always sticking up its dirty, malevolent, desolating head where it has the least excuse for being!

THE WISE PATENT-OFFICE CLERK

Now this little incident isn't merely the vaporings of an imagination predisposed to scoff at apprehension—it is cold fact, and of record:

In 1830 or thereabouts, a wise, far-seeing,

LAUGH IT OFF

forward-looking clerk in the patent-office at Washington viewed with alarm the rapidity with which people were exhausting the possibilities in the line of inventing ingenious devices; he foresaw clearly a complete and early famine of ideas to copyright by patent. So he quietly resigned and got himself a job elsewhere.

In 1830!

Wasn't he the canny chap? Nothing at all—not a thing!—has been invented since then except a list of important devices that this book's number of pages wouldn't hold, including such trifles as the telegraph, the telephone, the trolley-car, the automobile, the aeroplane, the submarine, electric lights, the wireless, the radio—in fact, everything we use for everyday purposes and regard as wholly indispensable.

And he was just as wise—that stupid patent-office clerk—as are other people who foresee certain and direful results and cata-

RESOURCEFUL PESSIMISTS

clysmic happenings in the ordinary channels of life. Just as wise as those people who, watching the railroad locomotive, proved to their own satisfaction that it never could run and then, as soon as it ran, proved just as conclusively that it could never stop.

RESOURCEFUL PESSIMISTS

The farmer in Kansas who kicked always over bad crops was greeted one fine morning by a fine friend who said:

“This weather is perfect for growing, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.”

“No pest bothering the corn or wheat or oats?”

“Nah.”

“Looks like a bumper crop, doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, so fur. But talkin’ about them bumper crops, you’ve no idee how they do take the stren’t h out o’ th’ soil!”

He was a brother, I think, to the man who

LAUGH IT OFF

was sitting weeping bitterly on an upturned soap box in his chicken yard.

"What's the trouble, old man?" asked a normal friend.

"Trouble enough! You know when I set my dominicker hen on thirteen eggs, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, every one o' them eggs spiled, but twelve!"

Something to worry about! Hunting it with a microscope. That same class of people would blindfold themselves if ever they started to look for things to be thankful for.

How they do struggle to keep unhappiness and uneasiness and fear and apprehension alive in an otherwise livable and lovable world!

WILLIE'S NUMEROUS DEATHS

I know a woman who has a son named Willie.

WILLIE'S NUMEROUS DEATHS

That boy looks like other boys who walk or play about.

You could never, never guess, from seeing that boy, how often he had died!

Died! Every kind of death from drowning to mangling and back again.

Every time he went swimming, the cheerful imagination of his doting mamma envisioned him being toted home in the wet arms of sad-faced neighbors—she could see (and dwelt on the picture) the boy's head laid back and his dripping hair above his blue face.

No details were too diminutive or ghastly for her to dwell upon.

The fact that he came home every time intact, with only the ends of his fingers wrinkled a little didn't do her any good.

He got drowned again the next time just the same.

Every time he went out nutting with the other boys he fell from a tree and was instantly

LAUGH IT OFF

killed—neck broken, usually, though sometimes it was his spine dislocated.

The fact that he came home with stained fingers and torn pants and a sweaty look of weary happiness on his countenance didn't help the next nutting trip he took.

Every time he went out to stay a day on the farm, he was chewed up by a mowing machine, bit by a rattlesnake or otherwise maltreated and put out of business.

The fact that he returned always with the proper number of legs and arms didn't cure her of her habit of imagining him dead.

Whenever he went for a brief railway journey he came home in pieces.

This picture continued till the boy actually did come home looking very much as he looked when he went away.

Now each time this boy died in his mother's imagination, he was mourned for, down in her poor, loving heart, as sincerely and as bitterly

WILLIE'S NUMEROUS DEATHS

as if the thing had occurred outside the realm of her imagination.

The mother of a little boy I knew who was actually the victim of tragedy—bless her brave heart—made less fuss over her actual calamity than did this woman at least a dozen times when there was not the slightest occasion for it.

Had she possessed a nickel's worth of faith (and she professed to be religious) she would have missed all these orgies of uncalled-for mourning.

I used to wonder how the samhill she would act if ever the boy did meet with a fatal or maiming accident.

She had done everything, without excuse, that there would have been to do if the clearest excuse had existed.

There was nothing left for her to do in case the real thing should take place.

She had even exhausted the sympathy of her most patient friends, so that in case of an aw-

LAUGH IT OFF

ful cataclysm even their assistance would have been given more or less perfunctorily because they had been compelled to suffer through all these useless rehearsals for nothing.

She had cried "Wolf, wolf!" so often when the flock was unmolested that none would have come to her assistance if the beast had come in the flesh.

OUR DUTY TO BUCK UP

What do such people make of the biblical assurances "Let not your heart be troubled?" What do they think of "A merry heart doeth good like medicine?" or "O ye of little faith."

What do they think of the sweet and assuring and calming things the words of divinity have expressed?

Do they think these words were all idle guff put in to make the book larger?

Do they imagine for a moment that if they were to make such an exhibition as that of the

OUR DUTY TO BUCK UP

effect of religion on themselves, they would ever have been told "Ye are the light of the world?"

Pretty rotten lights in my opinion. Enough to ruin the eyes of people foolish enough to depend upon them.

They need new bulbs.

About how high a batting average in truthfulness do these amateur jeremiahs generally get?

How many of their promises of holocausts ever reach fulfillment?

How many of the terrible things they "foretell" actually take place?

Figure it out.

If you had an accurate record of the number and kind of evil and happiness-destroying predictions a patient world has listened to; and laid beside it a fairly accurate history of the world's events you would see that about ninety-eight of each one hundred evils "foretold" by these joy-butchers failed to occur.

LAUGH IT OFF

We have been told in times past by a doctor named Malthus that long ere this present day the world would be over-populated and mankind would starve to death on that account.

There are still great waste places in the world where the foot of man has not trod as a settler or resident, and which are capable of sustaining billions of human beings in health and comfort.

And such suffering of human alimentary canals for the want of food as is now going on is not due to a crowding of the planet, but to the human tendency previously referred to—a tendency to refrain from manual or mental exertion between regular mealtimes; to a reluctance toward production and an avidity for grabbing what some one else has already produced.

The fuel supply of the earth was due to be exhausted many years ago according to the unsoothing soothsayers.

There is still far more fuel under the sur-

OUR DUTY TO BUCK UP

face of the earth than anybody seems willing to dig out for a price that can be agreed upon.

And other methods of heating will yet be devised that will bring about infinitely greater economy of fuel usage.

Invention is still in its infancy.

The destruction of the timber supply, which has been criminally ruthless indeed, was scheduled to have us all parched with drouth or washed away with floods—the prophets of calamity were about equally divided, like experts in lawsuits—long before this.

The boll-weevil had been granted the entire cotton crop of the South; the hessian fly had been formally presented, on a gold platter, all the country's wheat crop; the wire-worm and the hot winds had been begged to accept, as a token of our esteem, the whole corn-production of this fertile nation; the hogs were all making their wills, preparatory to utter annihilation by means of cholera, etc., chickens had their death warrants in their claws and only waited

LAUGH IT OFF

elimination when roup or gapes or pip or some other epidemic showed its grisly head; the foot-and-mouth disease had a first mortgage on every cow beast on all the farms and ranches, influenza had its claws an inch deep in the vitals of us mere humans—everything was going bow-wow-ward.

But here we are, game as pebbles, the toughest, the livest, the most indestructible, the most poison-proof, the most insultingly persistent things ever known.

Nature still seems, in the language of Tennyson, to be careless of the single life while still religiously preserving the type.

We are even about to become absolutely scare-proof.

REMEMBER AND BELIEVE

Remember now that other darkest hour
When you were ready to cry quits with life?
Your last defeat had shorn you of your power;
No more you'd be a "hero in the strife."

MAKING IMPOSSIBLE

Now that the dark has come to you again,
Remember: All life's best has come since then!

Remember when no single ray of hope
Came to you through the gloom of baffledness?
Remember how you could not even grope
Through that thick murk of piteous distress?
How can remembering but help you, when
Your finest triumphs all have come since then?

Remember well, and you can mock Despair;
Remember well, and you can only smile;
Remember well, and you can flout at Care;
Remember; shorten Sorrow's little while.
Remember well and you can never grieve;
Remember, and you only can believe!

MAKING WARNING IMPOSSIBLE

The time will come when things need to
be told us in the way of warning—yea, the
time is always present with us.

But there is so much false prophesy, so

LAUGH IT OFF

many howls of fire when there is not even any smoke, that the poor, bewildered human race doesn't find itself always able to distinguish the one from the other, the false from the true.

Most of the alarms are false alarms.

After having run our legs off to two or three fires that did not exist, we are likely to sit still and laugh while some conflagration starts that can really damage us.

Then who will be to blame for the loss?

Not we who didn't run that time, but they who had fooled us so often as to teach us that a scream of "Danger, danger"! did not necessarily mean anything.

"The truth itself is not believed,
From one who often has deceived."

WAR SCARES

When the great World War broke out, prophets of evil licked their slaverling jaws and started in for a veritable scare-fest.

WAR SCARES

You remember.

There wasn't anything awful that was not going to take place.

There was no adequate defense in Belgium or anywhere along the boundaries of France.

The Germans would be in Paris soon.

Then they would cross the channel and take Great Britain.

After that it would be a before-breakfast job to annex America.

Our property wouldn't be worth fifteen cents a square mile.

Our money would be valueless.

Our homes would be taken from us.

We would be enslaved, all our worth-while possessions confiscated.

Our children would be mutilated and murdered, our wives and daughters and sisters would be unspeakably maltreated—oh, it was going to be fine.

The prophets of evil drooled at their mouths and had the time of their nasty lives.

LAUGH IT OFF

How much of all that came to pass? A few people in this country kept their heads, a few kept their faith in the ultimate triumph of right, a few (with perhaps lower ideals, but with practical common sense) knew all the time not all those things could happen in presto-change magician style.

A few who had observed and had found out that bellyachers were always liars, kept their shirts on.

But the large majority of us were mighty uneasy.

All this gloom-talk was bound to get in its deadly work.

Then came the war's end, with Germany practically eliminated.

UNDISCOURAGED LIARS

Ever since, the same prophets who said we were all ticketed through to the bow-wows with no stop-off privileges, have been prophe-

UNDISCOURAGED LIARS

syng right straight ahead as if nothing had interrupted them.

The fact that none of the things they had foretold really had taken place didn't feaze them.

They didn't turn a hair.

Stopping only long enough to lick their foamy lips and get a fresh breath, they began telling us that all the marks Mars left upon us as he rode roughshod over us were only the premonitory symptoms of a still-worse fate that was headed our way.

While we have been groping our way back to the light "in the cold gray dawn of the morning after" our world's terrible saturnalian and bacchanalian debauch, these benefactors of the race have been going about dressed in mental ghost-masks with phosphorus rubbed about the mouth and eyes, and saying "Boo!" every time they get within hailing distance of us.

If we were to believe them literally, there

LAUGH IT OFF

would be no hope or heart left in the race to recuperate itself.

If we took seriously all they "foretell," the world would stay in an unreconstructed, what's-the-use state of mind for years to come.

Business would never again reach normality, whatever that is.

Reason and kindness and unselfish neighborliness would never again resume their sweet sway among us.

THE PRESENT GENERATION

The younger generation particularly has been driven to recklessness by this egregious guff, and we have been finding fault with it for its chaffiness and forced gayety.

They have been faring forth into a black darkness full of weird wails and startling whispers, scared to death, laughing

THE PRESENT GENERATION

hysterically, and saying through their chattering teeth, "Who's afraid?"

God pity them!

Whatever the present generation is that it ought not to be is the fault of the generation that preceded it, that brought it into the world and was supposed to guide it intelligently, kindly, and above all happily, to the years of discretion and responsibility.

Instead we have given it poor guidance, little help, no encouragement, and have scolded it bitterly—practically cast it off as incorrigible.

Never was any previous generation so to be pitied and sympathized with!

It is our bounden duty to keep heart in the young race.

And if we let them think the world is headed for inevitable destruction, what have they to look forward to?

It is our business to see that they have every

LAUGH IT OFF

reason to believe, after a look at our faces and into our lives, that the game is distinctly worth the candle.

They see us ahead of them and know we are seeing things they cannot yet see.

They watch our faces and listen to our voices.

If the former are blanched and joyless and the latter filled with bitterness or dull despair, what encouragement have they to go ahead with their lives and make them the biggest and best lives possible for them to live?

If the race should go from this point on a long, rough and damaging detour, we who form the generation that brought them into the world will be held responsible. Therefore, let us

SMILE AT THE CHILDREN

When a baby smiles at you, smile right back again; If he look askance at you, smile your sweetest then. He has come into a world big and strange and new.

SMILE AT THE CHILDREN

He must learn what sort of world—learn from such
as you.

You have been upon the road quite a little while!
He will judge if life is good, by your frown or smile.

When a child looks up at you, smile into his eyes.
He has all of life ahead—life that sternly tries
All the courage he can find, buy or beg or borrow!
Smile to show this new earth-guest not all life is
sorrow.

You have seen, as well he knows, more of life than
he—

Smile and let him understand life holds jollity.

When a child's eyes search your face, as all child-
eyes do,

Looking for the net effect life has had on you,
Let him see a smile of hope—smile of cheerfulness;
Smile that shows him you have found more than
bleak distress.

You, who know the road, assure every girl and boy
That the grown-ups' world contains heaps and heaps
of joy.

SONGS OF SANITY

SONGS OF SANITY

A WORRY ANTIDOTE

PETTY worry, here's a chair—come in and sit.
Note my momentary absence; pardon it.
There's a potent bit of knowledge hid somewhere
That can cope with you and rid me of your care.
Through the knothole known as ignorance you
came—

It is I and I alone must bear the blame.
Yet there somewhere is a fact you can't resist—
I shall find it, and its help I shall enlist.

Or if, seeking out the knowledge that you fear,
I should find it not, though seeking far and near,
There's a sure and strong protector that I know
Who will come and give one look—and out you'll
go.

This protector who will change you to a wraith
Is my never-failing friend whose name is Faith.
Summoned always when Sir Knowledge can't be
found,
Faith will come, and then I dare you linger round!

WHEN DAD'S AWAY

BUD, when your dad is milling round the map,
He's ever homesick for a certain chap
Whose star-eyed welcome waits for him alway—
We miss each other most at close of day,
When darkness falls about us, and we yearn
Both for the far-off time of my return.

Yet—son, don't breathe this to a single soul!—
When o'er the rails my train has ceased to roll,
And I am ushered to my hotel room
With ghastly splendor and its tawdry gloom,
And on the pillow I have laid my head,
I say: "Come, Bud, it's time our prayer was said."

As if you were tucked up beside me there
I say the old, familiar, bedtime prayer
I taught to you, and that we never miss
When I'm at home to claim my good night kiss.
Somehow I feel you snuggling to me then;
And next I know, the day has come again!

THE ONLY WAY OUT IS THROUGH

THE only way out of a job Bill knew
Was through!

He never once thought of going around
Or tunneling under it, into the ground,
Or turning back—none of these would do.
“The only way out of a job is through,”
Said Bill; and—well, he proved that he knew.

“Let’s build a derrick and go overhead,”
One said.

“The job is wrongly shoved on us;
It rightly belongs to the other cuss.
Let’s slide right by and leave it flat.”
But Bill with a grin said “None of that!
It isn’t my job by rights, ’tis true.
But the surest way out of a job is through”—
Whatever they put on Bill, he’d do.

Bill learned a lot that none other knew,
Going through.

Jobs hunted Bill up and got in his way
Till it even affected the poor boy’s pay!
And the others said: “Just watch that duck—
Some stupid fellows have all the luck!”
But luck had never a thing to do
With Bill’s success, for the head guys knew
Bill’s only way out of a stint was through.

Now they call him "Boss," those others do ;
And you,
If you for your motto will take old Bill's
And use your several brains and wills
And look less oft at the office clock,
Will soon have boosted *your* personal stock
Till the "luck" of Bill may be your "luck" too.
Remember his came because he knew
"The best way out of a task is through."

THE UNIVERSAL MARY

I SAW a mother young and fair bend tenderly above
A little cradled baby, all her face a-light with
love.

I watched, in her two misty eyes, the dreams she
dreamed for him,

Until with tears I could not quell, my own two eyes
grew dim.

There was no manger where he lay; no Magi came
from far;

There hung above that new-blest home no blazing
Christmas star.

No cattle lowed; no angels sang; no Herod had pro-
claimed

This new man-child of woman born should murdered
be, or maimed.

And yet this mother knew that if the world could
know how sweet

Her baby was, all men would come and worship at
his feet.

She knew that God himself had sent this blessing in
His stead;

And she, the mother, clearly saw the halo round his
head!

THE TWO ESSENTIALS

VISION is not everything. Brown has vision—
Brown's a dud.

He can see
What ought to be,
Yet he has no fighting blood!

Will alone is insufficient. Smith has will, and Smith's
a fizzle.

Wrong or right
He loves a fight—
Likes to see things seethe and sizzle.

Jones, a friend of Smith and Brown,
Living in the selfsame town,
Has a will and has a vision—
Can both see and make decision.
Jones has set the winning pace—
Has outstripped them in life's race.

*If an honored niche you'd fill,
Back your Vision with your Will.*

KEEP YOUNG AT HEART

BUT young at heart—God keep us that! Let
care be laughed to scorn.

Let's keep our backs to eventide and always face
the morn.

Let's keep the ripeness of our noon to guide the girls
and boys

Whose youth is callower than ours and lacking
deeper joys.

The snow of age may dust our hair, it cannot reach
within.

We'll teach those careworn youths of ours to bear
their griefs and grin—

Go to the one whose empty life has palled on him and
say:

“A wiser youth has come to me while you were turn-
ing gray.”

RICH

I KNEW he toiled for a modest wage,
As living costs in the present age.
And I asked myself, in accents grim:
"What can existence hold for him?"

One day when the afternoon grew late
I saw him enter a little gate,
Saw a baby, wild in its young delight,
Come running to him, with all its might,
Clasp him and kiss him and call him "Dad"—
Thus I caught a glimpse of the wealth he had.

And later I learned, convincingly,
That a true, contented wife had he;
That he owned the home where his loved ones dwelt;
That in quaint, old-fashioned way he knelt
Once every day, at the very least;
That he bowed his head o'er each humble feast
The good God gave; that they all had health—
So I knew he was blessed with boundless wealth.

Though still he works for a meager wage,
As living costs in this present age,
I ask no more, in accents grim,
What existence can hold for him.
He has done the things that men were made for;
Has what some men their souls would trade for—
What men of "wealth," unheard, have prayed for.

A WISH

SOME day beside you on the porch I'll sit
And slowly turn my head as folks go by;
The shadows of the wind-stirred vine may flit
About me there unnoticed of my eye;
I shall be filled with measureless content,
Nor care if skies be overcast or blue;
No restlessness with pleasure will be blent
If I may sit those dear, dear days with you.

There may be roses blooming by the porch;
There may be morning-glories on the wall;
The hollyhock may flaunt his garish torch—
Yet should they not, I'd see and scent them all;
For in the years we've traveled side by side
We've watched and loved these bonny things together;
Their perfume and their color shall abide
Deep in our lives, though wintry be the weather.

Why should I think upon some Heaven that lies
Beyond this life we've known and still shall know?
I want its lovelinesses to surprise
My earth-trained vision, when I homeward go;
The sweetest fate that I can comprehend
Is that, throughout the years that shall ensue
Between life's middle and its mist-veiled end,
I may stay quiet, somewhere, close by you.

YOUR DAD

You know your dad as a big, big man ;
A marvelous being that's most like God—
A being built on a splendid plan ;
Who holds the world at his beck and nod.
The happiest dream you ever dream
Is to be like him when you've older grown.
And you love to swagger and strut, and seem
To wield his power as though your own.

I know your dad as a big, big boy—
A lovable fellow who clearly knows
How shallow the gold 'neath his soul's alloy,
And who prays: "As my manikin older grows
May he be wiser than I have been—
This lad of mine that I love so well!"
For he loves you, son, as he can't begin
In a million of lives like this, to tell.

You know your dad, and I know him too.
He needs to be known as both of us know.
The worship that comes from the heart of you
Makes all that is best in him glow and grow.
This knowledge of mine, as men know men,
That allows for failings we all deplore,
Will encourage him always to try again
That he may deserve your worship, more.

INFINITE

EVERY hill is higher than the one you climbed
before;

Every vista's wider than the last one you had seen;
Every height attained expands your vision more and
more—

Further peaks uprear and grander valleys intervene.

He who says, "This steep I climb is final," speaks
amiss;

Only blindness hides from him the loftier heights
ahead.

Cloud-dim, snow-clad crags the morning's rosy fin-
gers kiss—

"Final" things are only for the soul whose hope has
fled.

THE BABY

LITTLE bit o' helpless babe with legs unused to
walking;

Little bit o' babe with hands that not a task can
do;

Little bit o' babbling babe with tongue unschooled
in talking,

God was wondrous generous to visit us with you!

God had seen the hunger that was gnawing at our
hearts;

God had heard the prayers that in secret we had
breathed;

God—himself the Fountain Head whence all our lov-
ing starts—

Sent you from His spirit land in golden glory
wreathed.

Ever since you came to us ourselves have been for-
got;

Ever since you came to us we've thought of you
alone;

Once our hearts were selfish—since you came to us,
they're not!

Precious bit o' baby God has let us call our own!

THE REAL HELPER

HE who lends me worldly wealth;
He who saves my body's health;
He who, when he finds me sad,
Smiles and speaks and leaves me glad—
All of these my helpers be;

Lacking one, my life should pall.
But who dreams my dreams with me
Serves me best of all.

He who slips an arm around
When life's skies on me have frowned;
He who trusts me when no other
In the wide world calls me brother—
Blest am I when these rare beams
Of God's sunshine on me fall.
Yet who helps me dream my dreams
Blesses most of all.

Never questions he my dream;
Never asks: "But do you deem
There's the light of reason in it?
Is there any chance to win it?"
Having only eyes to see
My cloud-castle fair and tall—
He who dreams my dreams with me
Helps me most of all.

AS FATHER KNOWS US

THE thoughtless may call him "a grubby young kid"

When he's playing about in the dirt;
The truth of the statement can scarcely be hid,
Though the ruthlessness carry its hurt.
Yet the lad that I see,
As he's known but to me,
Is a treasure instead of a bother;
He has many a trait—
Has my true-hearted mate—
That nobody knows but his father.

They see him by day when he's girded for strife,
While the problems of living appall him—
With his fighting face on, in the battle of life,
Resenting the cares that befall him.
I know him at night
In the low-shaded light,
When he yields, with a prayer of surrender—
With his play-wearied limbs,
And his babylike whims,
And all of his harshness grown tender.

We meet one another in life's busy day,
With all of the worst in us showing;
Each giving his selfishness plentiful sway
To keep our home hearth-fires burning.

But the "we" that he sees
Is above all of these
That are maddened by struggle and bother;
For we and our mates
Have a host of fine traits
That nobody knows but Our Father.

THE GUILTY PARTY

Do you think the world has changed?
No, it's you!

Do you think mankind deranged?

Well, it's you.

You have grown; your vision's clearer;

Right, to you, is nearer, dearer—

'Tisn't life that has grown queerer;

It is you!

GRANDMOTHER'S MEMORIES

WHENEVER there's a day of rain
My heart is honey-sweet with pain.
I listen to the varying drip
On porch and ground, and deeply sip
From memory's never-failing cup
That life and love keep filling up.

That thud upon a loosened board
Is his own step! A blessed horde
Of recollections throng about
To drive the care and heartache out.
He was so dear to me, and kind—
With happy tears my eyes are blind.

The livelier dripping on the mat—
A light and lilting pitapat—
Is Jamie's step: I see him now
With beads of warmth upon his brow
Because he had outrun his brother
To be the first to kiss his mother.

And where a little pool has come
Beneath the eaves' the heavy drum
Of water on the porch is broken
By tinkling laughter notes; a token
Of her whose love to me was dearest,
In woman understanding nearest.

Thus in their tempo and their tone
They bring me back my loved; my own
Who have been gone a little while
And soon shall greet me with their smile.
My heart is filled with joyous pain
Whenever there's a day of rain!

NIGHT IN JUNE

NIGHT in June, oh night in June!
Care I if there's not a moon?

June time magic is as potent whether Luna smile or
no.

Op'ning roses drenched with dew
Light their friendly lamps for you—
Every ruddy, scented petal sets the throbbing dark
aglow.

Night in June, your hush is sweeter
Than impassioned poet's meter;
There's a lilt, a pulsing measure in the silences you
bring.

You've a cadence even finer
Than the dulcet flute's, diviner
Than the viol's—in the stillnesses your jeweled hours
bring.

June night, I've no craving other;
Let your velvet darkness smother
Every trace of fret and turmoil in the mind and
heart of me;
May your silence hymn a dirge
To my restless spirit's urge
After things past dim horizons that my eyes shall
never see!

SMILES OF CHILDREN

THERE are smiles among the children; there is
hope for time-to-come;

Till the children cease to smile we'll not despair;
Though each portent point to ruin, we will never
quite succumb—

There are little children smiling everywhere;
In the heart of raving Russia, in Armenia the
crushed,

In the fever-gutted cities of the Serb,
There are little children smiling; there are faces
pleasure-flushed;

There is courage no calamity may curb.

There are smiles among the children wheresoe'er are
children found,

For the world begins anew for every child;
Though they're harnessed in a treadmill for the
world-old, dreary round,

Yet their spirits are to dread unreconciled.
All the grief of all the ages cannot hold their laugh-
ter back

If they're even halfway housed or fed or clad;
Let them glimpse a play-ball bounding, let them see
a rabbit track,

And they—well, they just are children and are
glad.

There are smiles among the children—let us mingle
ours with theirs;

Let us drop awhile, as they, the heavy load;
Let us stand awhile from under all our half-imagined
cares

And go singing with the children down the road;
All our problems would be simpler; and, the finest
thing of all,

We should lose our apprehensions that benumb;
There are little children smiling everywhere the sun-
beams fall—

While the children smile, there's hope for time-to-
come.

NO ROYAL ROAD

You are getting pay your father never got,
And are grumbling at the hours, like as not.
If the boss believes you lazy, says you "slack,"
You are clever in the art of talking back.
You are living in a time that's raising Ned!
Opportunity and wage have turned your head.
But despite some certain changes in the game,
All the traits that make a man remain the same.

'Twas the cruel knocks that made your father wise.
Why, your pay would seem a fortune in his eyes!
His were hunger, cold, privation; and the strife
Gave him strength to make a living and a life.
In your callow, cock-sure "wisdom" 'twere a crime
To have toiled so for the wages of his time.
Yet the pathway to achievement and to fame
Is, in spite of changed conditions, just the same.

You can make it, lad! Ambition has its way.
But 'twould much accelerate you on your way,
And your heart would be less bitter if you knew
All the hardships you'll encounter are your due.
Every hostile-seeming gale to which you bend
You'll acknowledge, when grown older, as a friend.
While they've modernized some features of the game,
Still the cards that take the tricks are just the same.

EXCESS PROPHETS

Now and then I meet a geezer
Who affects me like a freezer,
As he proves, by scripture, to me, in the most convincing way,
That the final consummation
Of this world and all creation
Is about to greet our startled eyes tomorrow or today.

As I listen, on the level
I am scareder than the d——l,
And am hardly worth my wages for an hour or maybe two.
True, he's been quite calm about it,
Didn't rant around or shout it,
But the deadly sureness of him makes me most almighty blue.

Later, I resume my breathing
And a careless smile is wreathing
All the features drawn with horror at the scare he handed me.
Yet anon when I am weary
Come to mind his augurs dreary
Till I long to hunt that prophet up and sting him like a bee.

If I'm living nice and decent,
Which I am—though this is recent—
How can knowledge of my finish help me any sort
of way?
So avaunt, you kill-joy prophet;
If you've bad news, do not cough it.
Let me earn my food and lodging all untroubled while
I may.

DOING KINDLY THINGS

SEE where Boy left the engine of his train,
A stumbling block to bring somebody pain.
I know he should be disciplined, and still—
This time I shall not chide. Next time I will!
From out the way the hindering things I shove—
Doing a kindly deed for one I love.

The little girl has strewn her paper dolls
Where Mother's watchful eye most sternly falls.
I start to call the child, to put away
The rubbish; then I hear her at her play,
And sigh and put in place her treasures trove—
Doing a kindly thing for one I love.

'Tis Mother's work—this "picking up the room"
To make all ready for the mop and broom.
But she is busied in the garden close
In loving care of bergamot and rose.
So gladly I attack the chaos of
The room—a kindly deed for one I love.

A board with bristling nails that yearn to hurt
Soft baby feet with canvas shoon begirt—
Such things our parent eyes and parent hands
See and remove, to sate our love's demands.
There is no joy this simple joy above—
Just doing kindly things for those we love.

BEAUTY IN HUMBLE PLACES

THE flowers that have blossomed in the little ugly places—

Arbutus-bloom, hepatica, wake-robin and the rest;
The blossoms that have glorified the dingy little spaces—

Of all the flowers blossoming, to me they seem the best!

The rose that crowns the rose-hedge where there's plenty more of beauty;

The tulip in the border where a world of tulips grow—

All these are faithful servitors that nobly do their duty.

Be mine the flowers blooming where no other beauties show!

Oh, humble little blossoms in the ugly little places,
How much we human garden plants may learn from such as you!

Why spend our time complaining of our dingy little spaces

Instead of doing bravely just the best that we can do?

WALKING ON THE WALL

MY wee one walked the narrow wall—
What child but hungers thus to go?—
Her eyes alert lest she might fall
On that rough-bouldered pave below.
At length she stopped, and thus her plea
As though o'erfull of care her cup:
“Please, Daddy, hold my hand for me
So when I walk I can look up.”

All-Father, when we walk the ways
That teem with pitfalls for our feet,
That baby plea of bygone days
Might in our sorest need be meet.
Tired out with watchfulness and care,
With strife for paltry bite and sup,
“Thou hold our hands,” we make our prayer,
“That while we walk we may look up.”

DOWN AND OUT

“**I**’m down and out!” the haggard pilgrim cries.
God pity him—how hard his path has been!
Yet “down” is where one starts from to arise;
And “out” is where one starts from to come in!

With stumbling blocks his feet were sore beset—
We grant him that, and sympathy to boot.
He sowed in hope, and harvested in fret;
He toiled, and drew his wage in dead sea fruit.

But what of that? While there is strength to wail,
Also remains the strength for better things—
Strength to o’ercome the pitfalls in the trail
And heed the song that Hope, the siren, sings.

So hear this word from one grown failure-wise:
None but yourself may say you shall not win.
“Down” is the place one starts from to arise;
And “out” where people start from to get in!

MY FATHER

I LIKE to play close by my father's den,
When he's at work, and every now and then
Ask: "Father, are you there?" He answers back:
"Yes, son." That time I broke my railroad track
All into bits, he stopped his work and came
And wiped my tears, and said: "Boy, boy! Be
game!"

And then he showed me how to fix it right,
And I took both my arms and hugged him tight.

Once, when I'd asked him if he still was there,
He called me in and rumped up my hair,
And said: "How much alike are you and I!
When I feel just as boys feel when they cry,
I call to our Big Father, to make sure,
That He is there, my childish dread to cure.
And always, just as I to you, 'Yes, son,'
Our Father calls, and all my fret is done!"

OUR VITAL KNOWLEDGE

FILL the brain of a man just as full as you can
With the lore of the present or past;
Pack his mind to the brim with mythology dim—
Such as Jason close-reefed to a mast;
Teach him high mathematics and Greek and quad-
ratics,
Make him dizzy with science and art;
Yet the best things he'll know and the things he'll
know best
Won't be found in his head—but his heart!

All the best of our truths the pre-pliocene youths
Knew aeons ago without thinking;
All the things we have added—with which we have
padded—
You can put in your eye without winking.
There is piffle galore and then piffle some more
We've persuaded ourselves is quite smart,
But the things we know best and the best things we
know
Have been known all the while in our heart.

When a crisis arrives in your fellow man's life
And it's right up to you to make good,
What's the thing you consult for the proper result
And to find how to act as you should?
Does a parchment diploma with college aroma
Play ever so humble a part?

No—the best you should know, that you ought to
know best

Is on file in the shelves of your heart.

Have some brains if you can—'tis a part of a man
That should never be suffered to rust;

Let escape not a chance to make knowledge ad-
vance—

'Tis the brainy man gathers the dust.

But mere brain, howe'er great, cannot love, cannot
hate,

Only minor, at most, is its part.

For the best things to know and the things to know
best

Man has known, from the first, in his heart.

HOMESICK

I DREAM of a smile—and the smile is yours!
I turn the key in my dear dream's doors
To hold you there, yet you slip away,
And darkness visits my dream-born day.

I dream of lips—and the lips are yours!
I press those lips while my spirit soars
To the back of the planets. I wake, and lo!
You've gone to the place where lost dreams go.

I dream of a soul—and the soul is you!
The miles that part us you've traveled through
At the call of my own soul, starved and wan;
I wake, and the soul that is you is gone!

Sometime you'll come, as I dream each night
You have come to me; and my spirit light
Will lift its songs to the star-decked dome.
Your smile, your lips and your soul make Home!

OUR SHIFTING AMBITIONS

At four he'd be a huckster man;
At six, an engineer;
By ten "Ben Hur" has changed his plan—
He'd be a charioteer.
At twelve he'd be a Captain Kidd
And fly the jolly Roger;
At fourteen he would grace "the grid"—
An artful half-back dodger.

Each year or two his heart is set
On something new and strange—
Sincere? He doesn't even let
Himself suspect a change.
Through golden gleams of boundless wealth
Past all the hopes of Midas
He goes, clear-browed and void of stealth—
This human thing inside us.

And then we come (deal gently, God,
With that Thy hand created!)
Once more to cherish sun and sod—
With futile dreamings sated.
We learn that, all things else above,
Life's rarest, fairest gem
Is just to love the souls we love
And to be loved by them.

LIFE'S COVERINGS

TWILIGHT is a velvet blanket
With fringe of beaten gold;
And hearts that joy or sorrow
Are hid in every fold.
For, wrapped in the twilight's blanket
Are those who smile—who weep.
Our Father tucks the golden fringe
And hushes us to sleep.

Midnight is a harsh, crepe blanket
Without the fringe of gold.
The hearts that know the midnight
Are broken or sick or old.
'Tis a long way down to Dawning—
'Tis a longer way back to Dusk!
The night hours sigh and whisper by
Like shreds of somber husk.

The dawn is a sheet of silver
With mother-of-pearl for marge;
It fills with the breath of morning—
Full sail for the new day's barge
Away on its fateful journey
The venturesome day ship goes
To bring blue skies for babies' eyes
And red to paint the rose.

ONE FARMER'S CHORTLE

M_Y food and my appetite both are good—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill
pull!

I've made more coin than I thought I could—
I've the world by the tail with a down-hill pull.
I can look in the face every man and child—
Nay more, the women, both tame and wild—
With a conscience spotless and undefiled:
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.

I've given the goods and taken the price—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
I have lost my profit once or twice—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
The things I've bought have soared and soared,
And grain has slumped till all our hoard
Was gone; but conditions will be restored—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.

I know some farmers are glum and blue—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
But that condition is nothing new—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
A pessimist only has liver complaint;
It's not how is business or how business ain't
That smears all his view with cerulean paint—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.

So long as I'm honest in service and goods,
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
I'll whistle because I am out of the woods—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.
I never will weep over what I can't help;
The dog of despair is a cowardly whelp.
Though hurt in the fight I'll not utter a yelp—
I've the world by the tail, with a down-hill pull.

WHEN HE GOES TO PLAY WITH THE BOYS

As I start for a saunter, I turn and say:
“Will you come, my son, or remain and play
With the other lads?” And my chum declares
He’ll stay with the boys. Ere a brace of squares
I’ve gone, there’s a patter I love to hear,
And a breathless voice says: “Father dear,
I changed my mind and I’ve come with you.”
Then life is tinged with a rosy hue.

Yet I know in my innermost heart, that some
Not distant day the time will come
When I’ll hear no patter, no breathless voice;
And my heart is hurt, though it should rejoice.
For the world must be ruled by the sturdy lads
Who loose the leashes of loving dads;
Who live ’mid the present’s griefs and joys—
Who go to “play with the other boys.”

THE HEART BLOSSOM

AN apple, big and red and round;
No orchard monarch ever found
Surpassed in beauty, taste or smell,
This, that from perfect ripeness fell.
Midway 'twixt stem and blossom end
My blade I made all haste to send—
I halved it. In that apple's heart
I saw the blossom's counterpart!

A seed pod, where each petal fair
Had been, lay spread before me there—
A working model of the bloom
That once had lightened March's gloom.
Through all the fortnights that had flown
The while that fruitage fine had grown,
The blossom's image had remained
To that great apple's heart enchained.

Deep down within each human heart
Lives our Creator's counterpart!
The God-thought out of which we came
Still lingers, ever more the same.

THE SONG OF THE ROAD

I must look them in the eyes
 When I go home ;
So I'm under obligations,
 As I roam,
 To be white and clean and square
 All the time and everywhere,
Or I'd have to dodge their eyes
 When I go home.

I must look them in the eyes
 And feel no shame.
Feel no consciousness of guilt
 Or cause for blame.
 So I'll do the best I can
 To be every whit a man,
Or I couldn't face the folks
 And feel no shame.

I must kiss them with clean lips
 When I return ;
So the kisses of the wanton
 I must spurn.
 For their sweet belief in me
 Unbetrayed must ever be ;
I must kiss with decent lips
 When I return !

I must give what I expect
 When I go home ;
Love as high and wide and pure
 As heaven's dome.
Right must triumph in the end ;
God's own rules we cannot mend ;
I must give what I expect
 When I go home.

SPRING PERPETUAL

IF birds be singing in your soul,
What matter though the snow-clouds roll
Across a sky that's bleak and drear
Or that the winter time is here?

If buds be bursting in your heart,
What though men hasten through the mart
With collars lifted 'round their ears
And eyes a-brim with wind-made tears?

If it be sweet springtime within,
We need not heed the breezes thin;
We need not even wonder whether
The season calls for wintry weather.

THE R. F. D. BOX

THE little R. F. D. box at the entrance of the
lane—

I think I heard the flivver, so I'll visit it again.

But no! the tracks are old ones—

The trail of yesterday;

Those tire prints are cold ones,

Alas and lackaday!

Oh, little R. F. D. box!

Oh, anything-for-me? box!

The let's-run-down-and-see box

At the entrance of the lane.

'Twas there we found the letter from our cousin Ida
Jane—

There in that R. F. D. box at the entrance of the
lane.

She told us of a big estate

Held from us, overseas;

We sat that night and talked till late—

Lost faith, by slow degrees.

The little R. F. D. box,

The wealth-beyond-the-sea box,

The thing-that-could-not-be box

At the entrance of the lane.

It brings us more than hoaxes, though—brings joy
as well as pain—

That kindly R. F. D. box at the entrance of the lane.
It brings the monthly magazine
 To teach and please us all,
And keep the great world's memory green
 Inside our rustic wall.
 The little R. F. D. box,
 The blessed-as-can-be box,
 The joy-for-you-and-me box
 At the entrance of the lane!

THE MOON PATH

THERE'S a glowing silver path across the water
to the moon—

Stretching far beyond the combers that are break-
ing on the beach.

There is music past believing in the wavelet's lapping
croon,

And our ecstasy, who listen, is beyond the realm
of speech.

We can merely sit and wonder at the glory of it all—

Sit and rapturously dream upon the dune;

For our souls have gone a-gypsying, gone straying
past recall,

On that path across the water to the moon.

There is darkness soft, diaphanous as silken laces
are,

On each selvage of that path across the water to
the moon,

And the further side of Nevermore is less remote by
far

Than the bourne our souls go seeking on that glit-
tering lagoon.

So we sit and dumbly marvel at the splendor of it all!

Though our earthly selves lie prone upon the dune,
Yet our spirits go a-roving, go a-straying past
recall,

On that path across the water to the moon.

AS I GO ON MY WAY

M^y life shall touch a dozen lives before this day
is done—

Leave countless marks for good 'or ill ere sets this
evening's sun.

Shall fair or foul its imprint prove, on those my life
shall hail?

Shall benison my impress be, or shall a blight
prevail?

When to the last great reckoning the lives I meet
must go,

Shall this wee, fleeting touch of mine have added joy
or woe?

Shall He who looks their records o'er—of name and
time and place—

Say: "Here a blessed influence came," or "Here is
evil's trace"?

From out each point of contact of my life with other
lives

Flows ever that which helps the one who for the sum-
mit strives.

The troubled souls encountered—does it sweeten with
its touch,

Or does it more embitter those embittered overmuch?

Does love through every handclasp flow in sym-
pathy's caress?

Do those that I have greeted know a newborn
hopefulness?

Are tolerance and charity the keynote of my song
As I go plodding onward with earth's eager, anxious
throng?

My life must touch a million lives in some way ere
I go

From this dear world of struggle to the land I do
not know.

So this the wish I always wish, the prayer I ever
pray:

Let my life help the other lives it touches by the way!

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